

PRESS RELEASE

Pakistan receives first consignment of COVID-19 vaccines via COVAX facility



More than one million doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine delivered by COVAX to support Government's efforts to vaccinate high-risk people across Pakistan.

ISLAMABAD, 8 May 2021 – Today Pakistan received its first shipment of Oxford-AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines (SII-AZ AZD1222) from the COVAX Facility.

The consignment of 1,238,400 doses of vaccines, which will be followed by another of 1,236,000 in a few days, will support the Government of Pakistan's ongoing historic drive to bring the pandemic to an end. Further allocations from June onwards will be confirmed in due course. The goal of the COVAX Facility is to supply Pakistan with enough doses to vaccinate 20% of the population depending on availability.

Dr. Faisal Sultan, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination, welcomed this first consignment together with representatives of COVAX technical and funding partners at the headquarters of the National Emergency Operations Center (NEOC).

"In this unprecedented crisis, we appreciate COVAX and GAVI's contribution to the collective effort to fight COVID-19 in Pakistan," said **Dr. Faisal Sultan, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination**. "Sometimes, such crises propel innovation and to this end, we were able to quickly expand the capacity of EPI's facilities to vaccinate our eligible population against COVID. Recently, we've been administering almost 200,000 doses a day and we will be able to increase to 0.5 million doses a day very soon. I urge everyone above the age of 40 to register get vaccinated so we can continue our mission to immunize our fellow citizens, especially the ones who fall in the high-risk and vulnerable groups. Very soon, we will be able to expand the campaign to other age groups and demographics."

The Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines will supplement the vaccines purchased by the Government of Pakistan and help boost the drive to immunize frontline health workers, senior citizens and other priority groups identified in the National Deployment and Vaccination Plan developed under the leadership of the National Command Operation Center.

More than 3.3 million vaccine doses have been administered to healthcare workers and citizens at large. The Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination also ramped up the cold chain capacity of the Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) to meet the requirements of the vaccine deployment plan. This also includes ultra-cold chain facilities in 15 large cities. Currently, citizens above the age of 40 can register and get vaccinated by following an easy process. Citizens above the age of 50 can walk into the nearest center and get vaccinated. Some districts are also providing at-home services for senior citizens. Sinopharm, Sinovac, CanSino-Bio and Sputnik doses have been administered in Pakistan so far.

The 2.47 million doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine will be used to immunize about 1.24 million high-risk people against the virus.

Oxford-AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine was developed in collaboration with Oxford University and is manufactured by AstraZeneca and COVISHIELD, licensed to and manufactured by AstraZeneca-SKBioscience (AZ-SKBio) in South Korea. It has gone through rigorous processes to ensure safety and efficacy and has been given the greenlight by the World Health Organization to be rolled out globally.

"Over the past year, WHO has been standing side by side with the Government of Pakistan providing technical guidance and new tools needed to prepare for, prevent, detect and respond to the spread of this new virus. Today, we are delighted to receive the COVID-19 vaccine that will safely and effectively prevent needless suffering. This vaccine has gone through clinical trials and has been approved for use in Pakistan and around the world," said **Dr. Palitha Gunarathna Mahipala, WHO Representative in Pakistan**. "Right now, WHO's focus is on supporting Pakistan to end the pandemic, including with these new vaccines and the public health measures that have been the bedrock of the response for 15 months. We thank the Government of Pakistan for their commitment to ensure these vaccines are swiftly administered all across Pakistan and our health care workers for their hard-work and dedication during the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic."

COVAX, a global partnership, is co-led by the World Health Organization (WHO); Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance; and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), along with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). It is funded thanks to generous support from partner governments, foundations and private sector corporations.

The goal of the COVAX Facility is to ensure that safe, effective COVID-19 vaccines are rapidly available to all countries around the world regardless of income level, to help end the acute phase of the pandemic as quickly as possible. It aims to provide at least 2 billion doses of approved COVID-19 vaccines by the end of 2021, enabling the protection of frontline health care and social workers, as well as other high-risk and vulnerable groups in what will be the largest immunization campaign in history.

"UNICEF is proud to be leading efforts to procure and supply safe, effective and affordable COVID-19 vaccines on behalf of the COVAX facility which aims to quickly reach people in low and middle-income countries and ensures that no one at risk is left behind. UNICEF commends the Government of Pakistan for its leadership in the national response to the pandemic, including the successful roll-out of the national vaccination programme, and thanks the COVAX partners for their generous contribution. Solidarity is key to ending the pandemic. No one is safe until everyone is safe", said **Aida Girma, UNICEF Representative in Pakistan**. "I urge all those who are eligible to get vaccinated and appeal to everyone to strictly comply with COVID-19 safety measures to curb the spread of virus."

"This delivery – the first of many – is the product of an unprecedented global partnership to ensure no country is left behind in the global race for COVID-19 vaccines," said **Alexa Reynolds, Gavi Senior Country Manager for Pakistan**. "These vaccines are safe, they are effective, and they will play an important role in helping the country to end this pandemic."

850,131 cases of COVID-19 have been reported in Pakistan since the start of the outbreak and 18,677 people have succumbed to the disease so far.

Key preventive behaviours against the coronavirus include regularly washing hands with soap for at least 20 seconds or use a sanitizer; wear a mask; remain at least six feet away from other people; avoid crowded places; and stay home when having COVID-19 symptoms.

COVAX technical and funding partners will continue to work with the Government through the pandemic to ensure that no one is left behind.

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The following diplomatic missions and COVAX donors attended the handover ceremony:

“ We welcome the opportunity to concretely show our solidarity with the Government of Pakistan and support its efforts to fight the coronavirus through this important delivery of vaccines. We are proud to play our part in the global COVAX initiative, alongside our partners, as it helps to complement efforts where vaccines are needed. For the time being SOPs still need to be followed,” said **Ms. Androulla Kaminara, Ambassador of the European Union to Pakistan.**

“The United States welcomes the successful arrival in Pakistan of 1.2 million doses of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine. We remain committed to working bilaterally and multilaterally to support access to vaccines for the world’s most at-risk populations,” said **U.S. Embassy Chargé d'affaires Angela P. Aggeler.** “This pandemic has shown the importance of partnerships, such as the longstanding partnership between the United States and Pakistan, which has enabled us to more effectively respond to this health crisis together.”

“I’m proud of the UK’s role in developing the Oxford University AstraZeneca vaccine that Pakistan is receiving today. The UK is one of the world’s biggest contributors to the COVAX facility - donating £548m to make sure countries get the vaccines they need, including Pakistan.”,” said **Dr. Christian Turner, British High Commissioner to Pakistan.**

“Today’s arrival of the first COVAX batch in Pakistan is an important milestone for fighting this pandemic together. It is also a strong token of multilateralism and international solidarity at its best. Germany, as second largest donor, is proud of contributing to the COVAX facility more than 1.5 billion EUR because we are convinced: An inclusive global access to vaccines is the need of the hour and nobody is safe until everyone is safe!” said **Dr. Philipp Deichmann, Charge d’Affaires /DHM, Embassy of Germany in Pakistan.**

For more information, please contact:

Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination

Sajjid Shah, +92 301 5103069

Taha Tariq, tahatariq0909@gmail.com

UNICEF

Catherine Weibel, UNICEF Pakistan, cweibel@unicef.org, +92 300 500 2592

WHO

Maryam Yunus, WHO Pakistan, yunusm@who.int, +92 300 8441744

Notes to editors

So far donors to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment include Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, European Union, Australia, Bhutan, Canada, Colombia, Japan, Korea, Kuwait, Monaco, New Zealand, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, Anonymous Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, KS Relief/Gamers Without Borders, Mastercard, Medline International, Nikkei Inc., Reed Hastings and Patty Quillin, Shell, Thistledown Foundation, TikTok, Transferwise, Soccer Aid.

The list of donor pledges to COVAX AMC is available [here](#).

About COVAX

COVAX, the vaccines pillar of the [Access to COVID-19 Tools \(ACT\) Accelerator](#), is co-led by CEPI, Gavi and WHO – working in partnership with developed and developing country vaccine manufacturers, UNICEF, the World Bank, and others. It is the only global initiative that is working

with governments and manufacturers to ensure COVID-19 vaccines are available worldwide to both higher-income and lower-income countries.

CEPI is leading on the [COVAX vaccine research and development portfolio](#), investing in R&D across a variety of promising candidates, with the goal to support development of three safe and effective vaccines which can be made available to countries participating in the COVAX Facility. As part of this work, CEPI has secured first right of refusal to potentially over one billion doses for the COVAX Facility to a number of candidates, and made strategic investments in vaccine manufacturing, which includes reserving capacity to manufacture doses of COVAX vaccines at a network of facilities, and securing glass vials to hold 2 billion doses of vaccine. CEPI is also investing in the 'next generation' of vaccine candidates, which will give the world additional options to control COVID-19 in the future.

Gavi is leading on procurement and delivery for COVAX, coordinating the design and implementation of the [COVAX Facility](#) and the [COVAX AMC](#) and working with Alliance partners UNICEF and WHO, along with governments, on country readiness and delivery. The COVAX Facility is the global pooled procurement mechanism for COVID-19 vaccines through which COVAX will ensure fair and equitable access to vaccines for all 190 participating economies, using an allocation framework formulated by WHO. The COVAX Facility will do this by pooling buying power from participating economies and providing volume guarantees across a range of promising vaccine candidates. The Gavi COVAX AMC is the financing mechanism that will support the participation of 92 low- and middle-income countries in the Facility, enabling access to donor-funded doses of safe and effective vaccines. UNICEF and the Pan-American Health Organisation (PAHO) will be acting as procurement coordinators for the COVAX Facility, helping deliver vaccines to all participants.

WHO has multiple roles within [COVAX](#): It provides normative guidance on vaccine policy, regulation, safety, R&D, allocation, and country readiness and delivery. Its Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) on Immunization develops evidence-based immunization policy recommendations. Its Emergency Use Listing (EUL)/prequalification programmes ensure harmonized review and authorization across member states. It provides global coordination and member state support on vaccine safety monitoring. It developed the target product profiles for COVID-19 vaccines and provides R&D technical coordination. WHO leads, along with UNICEF, the support to countries as they prepare to receive and administer vaccines. The [Country Readiness and Delivery](#) (CRD) workstream includes Gavi and numerous other partners working at the global, regional, and country-level to provide tools, guidance, monitoring, and on the ground technical assistance for the planning and roll-out of the [vaccines](#). Along with COVAX partners, WHO is also developing a no-fault compensation scheme as part of the time-limited indemnification and liability commitments.

UNICEF is leveraging its experience as the largest single vaccine buyer in the world and working with manufacturers and partners on the procurement of COVID-19 vaccine doses, as well as freight, logistics and storage. UNICEF already procures more than 2 billion doses of vaccines annually for routine immunization and outbreak response on behalf of nearly 100 countries. In collaboration with the [PAHO Revolving Fund](#), UNICEF is [leading efforts](#) to procure and supply doses of COVID-19 vaccines for COVAX. In addition, UNICEF, Gavi and WHO are working with governments around the clock to ensure that countries are ready to receive the vaccines, with appropriate cold chain equipment in place and health workers trained to dispense them. UNICEF is also playing a lead role in efforts to foster trust in vaccines, delivering vaccine confidence communications and tracking and addressing misinformation around the world.

About Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance

Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance is a public-private partnership that helps vaccinate half the world's children against some of the world's deadliest diseases. Since its inception in 2000, Gavi has helped to immunise a whole generation – over 822 million children – and prevented more than 14 million deaths, helping to halve child mortality in 73 lower-income countries. Gavi also plays a key role in improving global health security by supporting health systems as well as funding global stockpiles for Ebola, cholera, meningitis and yellow fever vaccines. After two decades of progress, Gavi is now

focused on protecting the next generation and reaching the unvaccinated children still being left behind, employing innovative finance and the latest technology – from drones to biometrics – to save millions more lives, prevent outbreaks before they can spread and help countries on the road to self-sufficiency. Learn more at www.gavi.org and connect with us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

The Vaccine Alliance brings together developing country and donor governments, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the World Bank, the vaccine industry, technical agencies, civil society, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and other private sector partners. View the full list of donor governments and other leading organizations that fund Gavi's work [here](#).

About UNICEF

UNICEF works in some of the world's toughest places, to reach the world's most disadvantaged children. Across 190 countries and territories, we work for every child, everywhere, to build a better world for everyone. For more information about UNICEF and its work for children, visit www.unicef.org and www.unicef.org/pakistan. For more information about COVID-19, visit www.unicef.org/coronavirus. Find out more about UNICEF's work on the COVID-19 vaccines [here](#), or about UNICEF's work on immunization [here](#). Follow UNICEF Pakistan on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

About WHO

The World Health Organization provides global leadership in public health within the United Nations system. Founded in 1948, WHO works with 194 Member States, across six regions and from more than 150 offices, to promote health, keep the world safe and serve the vulnerable. Our goal for 2019-2023 is to ensure that a billion more people have universal health coverage, to protect a billion more people from health emergencies, and provide a further billion people with better health and wellbeing.

For updates on COVID-19 and public health advice to protect yourself from coronavirus, visit www.who.int and follow WHO on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), [TikTok](#), [Pinterest](#), [Snapchat](#), [YouTube](#). [Follow WHO Pakistan on Twitter and Facebook.](#)